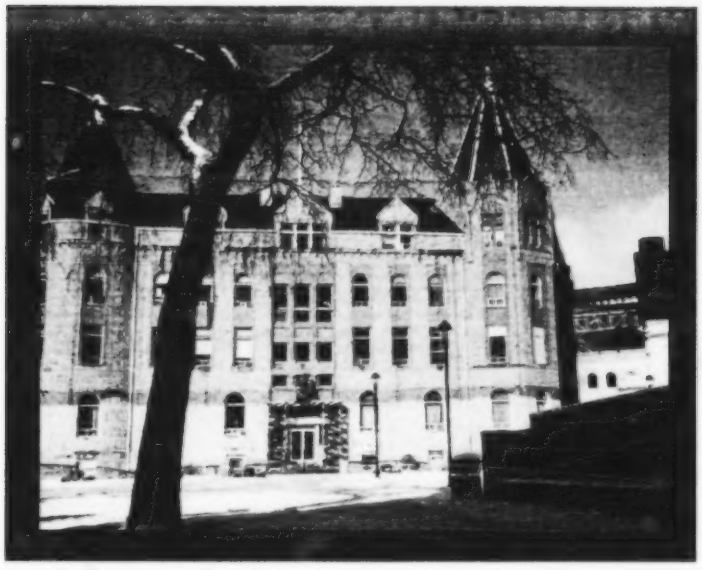
The Spence Redevelopment Project



Community Consultation Discussion Paper

THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the month of December 2004, the University of Winnipeg conducted a series of community consultations. Led by Jennifer Rattray, David Northcott and Jino Distasio, over 225 community members had an opportunity to share their thoughts and concerns with respect to the pending redevelopment of Spence Street. To accommodate the need to provide local residents which a chance to voice their opinion, two methods were used.

First, a combination of students and local community members conducted a door-to-door survey. The intent was to draw a selection of residents that represented the immediate areas surrounding the University of Winnipeg, including the neighbourhoods of Spence, West Broadway and Central Park. An emphasis was also placed on capturing those residents likely to be most affected by the development (Young and Spence streets in particular). Interviewers also spent time in local community "hotspots" such as coffee shops, laundromats and other key neighbourhood places.

The result of this aspect of the consultation process was overwhelmingly positive with just over 80% being supportive of the University of Winnipeg's concept plan.

In the second phase of the consultation process, four community forums were held at Crossways-in-Commons, St. Matthew's Maryland Christian Centre, Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre and Knox United Church. In these dialogue sessions, Jennifer Rattray opened the discussion with a brief overview of the intended plans and then invited guests to share their thoughts and concerns.

The results of the forums were also supportive of the plan, with community members offering a range of ideas.

The specific findings of the door-to-door surveys and the community forums have been summarized in this report.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction....One

1.1 Methodology....Two

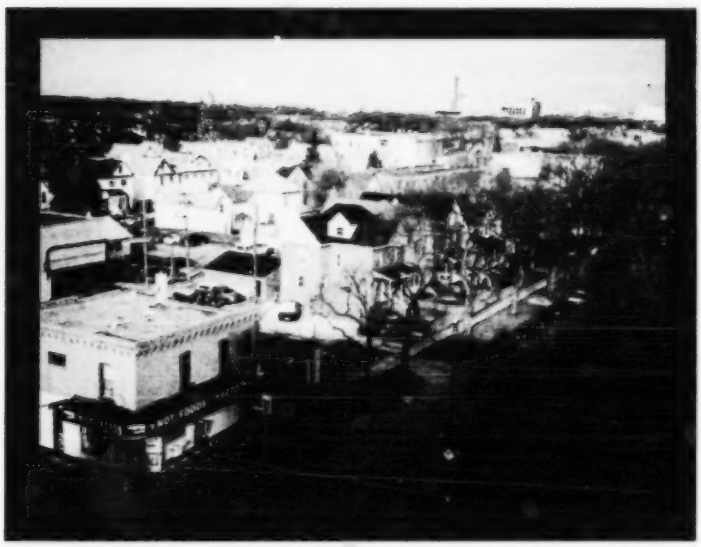
2.0 Results of Door-to-Door Surveys....Three

2.1 Summary of the Door-to Door Surveys....Nine

3.0 The Community Forums....Nine

3.1 Summary of the Community Forums....Fourteen

4.0 Conclusion....Fourteen



Surrounding Neighbourhood
Looking North from the University of Winnipeg

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The desire of the University of Winnipeg to restrict traffic and convert Spence Street into a pedestrian friendly area has long been part of the strategic plan. Recent efforts have certainly been accelerated by the rapid rise in the student population which is approaching 9,000. With increasing enrollment, the redevelopment of the street will allow for additional classroom space, promote safety, and act as a catalyst for the renewal of Downtown West.

To engage the community in the process and ensure that their views and opinions are included in the planning, the University of Winnipeg undertook as series of consultations. First, David Northcott and Jennifer Rattray conducted extensive fieldwork, contacting hundreds of local stakeholders. The outcome of these discussions raised a number of important issues such as:

- Safety
- Community Recreational Facilities
- Community Computer Centre
- Community Services
- Affordable Housing
- Increased Greenspace
- Transportation Hub
- Parking/Traffic

To allow further community ownership of the project, the Institute of Urban Studies was invited to participate in two key information gathering phases. The first was a door-to-door survey. This was conducted by both students and local community members. The purpose was to talk with local residents and gather initial reactions to the proposed project.

In a second series of consultations, four intimate community forums took place at Crossways-in-Commons, St. Matthew's Maryland Christian Centre, Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre and Knox United Church. Each forum allowed residents to meet and view the concept drawings and share their thoughts and ideas on the concepts being presented.

1.1 METHODOLOGY

The strategy used to engage residents in the door-to-door survey was to connect student interviewers with local residents to gathering initial reactions to the plan. To prepare interviewers, a training session was conducted at the Institute of Urban Studies, where researchers were given instructions and the necessary background information to assist them in the surveying process.

The surveys were then conducted over a four day period in the Spence, West Broadway and Central Park neighbourhoods. The intent was to gauge resident sentiment regarding the proposed Spence Redevelopment Plan. The survey contained four open ended questions, with the idea being to complete each doorway survey in under ten minutes. Each interview began with a brief overview of the project to ensure residents were familiar with the proposed plan. The questions included were as follows:

- Do you have any initial thoughts on this project?
- Can you think of any benefits or issues with such a development in the neighbourhood?
- Can you think of any facilities, services or programs that are needed in the neighbourhood at the present time?
- Are there any other comments or thoughts you would like to add?

Interviewers and David Northcott randomly selected streets to survey. An emphasis was placed on those areas closest to the University of Winnipeg to ensure that those most affected were given an opportunity to share their thoughts and concerns. In total 146 surveys were conducted in homes, coffee shops and other local areas businesses and community centers.

It should be noted that for persons who did not respond to our efforts, information was left in their mailbox about the project, contact numbers to schedule an interview or leave comments, and also information regarding the community forums.

The initial coding of the survey data was done by reviewing each survey and entering a reference number. Data was then examined for patterns and consistent variables which could be labeled. Once the data were reviewed, they were then coded accordingly and entered into SPSS for analysis.

With respect to the community forums, the intent was to offer a safe and inviting atmosphere for residents to come and share their thoughts. The forums commenced with an overview of the project and then residents were invited to respond to questions or raise issues. Advertising for the forums included community newspapers, other media and drops of flyers by interviewers. It is estimated that in excess of 75 residents attended the four forums.

The reporting of the results of the forums were based on a general summary of the key observations and notes taken during each session.

Although no sampling framework was used in the surveys or recruitment of forum attendees, it was the intent of both methods to provide a general overview of the community sentiment regarding the concept plan. Furthermore, it remains the intention of the University of Winnipeg to continue the process of engaging the community and encouraging them to be partners in the ongoing process.

"It would be nice to walk down a street like this, it would beautify Spence and could help the community"

Survey Participant

2.0 RESULTS OF THE DOOR-TO-DOOR SURVEYS

As noted, 146 door-to-door surveys were completed over a four day period. Generally, the overall sentiment was very positive (Table One).

Table One: General Sentiment		
General Sentiment Level	**Frequency**	**Valid Percentage**
Positive	82	82.8
Negative	11	11.1
Neutral	6	6.1
Total Number of Respondents	**99**	**100.0**

To further assess question one, the responses were then coded thematically to determine relevant positive or negative comments. The results are as follows:

Table Two: Positive Sentiment Regarding Plan		
Category Label	**Responses**	**Valid Percentage**
Good for Community	15	19.2
Crime /Safety	13	16.7
Good for Downtown	9	11.5
Convenience/Accessibility	6	7.7
Good for Students	5	6.4
Improve Traffic	5	6.4
Student Housing	5	6.4
Daycare	4	5.1
Good for University	3	3.8
Economy/Property Values	3	3.8
Recreation Facility	2	2.6
Clinic	2	2.6
Computers	2	2.6
Community Mall	1	1.3
Good for Kids	1	1.3
More People/Pedestrians	1	1.3
Based on Other Development	1	1.3
Total Responses	**78**	**100.0**

It should be noted that 58/146 respondents provided a total of 78 comments(indicating that some expressed more than one positive idea about the plan).What is important to stress is that persons contended that the project would be good for the community and that it could potentially help deal with the crime and safety issues in the neighbourhood. Furthermore, it is also observed that the project is certainly being viewed as good for downtown and for students in general.

With respect to the types of comments recorded, one person wrote **"excellent idea, will it be like Corydon or Ottawa's Spark Street?"** while a second person felt that it would be "**good for security, and bring more security around."**

Question one also raised some negative issues with the plan. In total, 17% of respondents provided a concern, with most relating to traffic. The variable "prioritize" included general thoughts on perhaps there are more pressing issues in the neighbourhood that should be dealt with first (but these were seen as not being relevant to the UofW proposal).

Table Three: Initial Negative Comments on Plan

Category Label	Responses	Valid Percentage
Traffic	8	28.6
Prioritize	7	25.0
Trust	4	14.3
Funding	3	10.7
Parking	2	7.1
Effects on Existing Community/ Residents	2	7.1
Crime	1	3.6
Do Not Need Another Clinic	1	3.6
Total Responses	**28**	**100.0**

Overall, question one should be viewed favorably as providing strong support for the project. But again keeping mind that not all respondents answered the question.

The second question was more specific and asked respondents to list any benefits or issues that may potentially arise in the development. As in question one, an attempt was made to first code the responses as being positive, negative or neutral. The result is as follows:

Table Four: General Sentiment in Question Two		
General Sentiment	**Responses**	**Valid Percentage**
Positive	83	70.9
Neutral	22	18.8
Negative	12	10.3
Total Responses	**117**	**100.0**

Subsequently, the responses from question two were then coded thematically, with the positive elements denoted as follows:

Table Five: Benefits of Plan		
Category	**Responses**	**Valid Percentage**
Crime/Safety	29	22.1
Daycare	4	3.1
More People/Pedestrian Traffic	14	10.7
Good for Community	13	9.9
Good for Students	11	8.4
Student Housing	5	3.8
Good for Downtown	6	4.6
Improve Traffic	8	6.1
Community/University Collaboration	7	5.3
Computers	5	3.8
Convenience/Accessibility	4	3.1
Good for University	4	3.1
Good for Kids	4	3.1
Recreation Facility	3	2.3
Clinic	3	2.3
Inexpensive Stores	3	2.3
Economy/Jobs/Property Values	3	2.3
Community Mall	2	1.5
Improved Lighting	2	1.5
Affordable housing	1	.8
Total Responses	**131**	**100.0**

The results are similar to that of the first question but more comments arose (131 in total), also 60% of respondents answered the question. As is noted above, many perceive that the project will help address crime and safety concerns, while also bringing more people and pedestrian traffic into the area. Again, it does appear that many in the neighbourhood are looking toward the University of Winnipeg to help deal with crime and safety issues.

The issues raised in the second question are similar to those noted in question one in that relatively few persons (just over 20% offered comment). However, traffic stands out as a key issue. Although relatively few persons responded, ensuring that traffic issues are included in any plan would be well-received in the community.

Table Six: Issues Raised with Plan

Category Label	Responses	Valid Percentage
Traffic	13	35.1
Effect on Existing Community/ Residents	7	18.9
Crime	5	13.5
Funding	4	10.8
Trust	3	8.1
Prioritize	2	5.4
Parking	1	2.7
Do Not Need Another Clinic	1	2.7
Too Cold in Winter	1	2.7
Total Responses	**37**	**100.0**

I appreciate that they are consulting with the community by conducting this survey and holding forums."

Survey Participant

The third question asked what is needed in the neighbourhood. This was the most answered question, with respondents offering 222 suggestions. The distribution does point to the need to consider the economics of the area (inexpensive stores that community persons could use) and ensuring that youth programs are in place. Recreation also was noted with a high frequency.

Table Seven: What is Needed in the Neighbourhood

Category Label	Responses	Valid Percentage
Inexpensive Stores	27	12.2
Recreation Centre	21	9.5
Youth programs/Drop in Centre	21	9.5
Clinic	16	7.2
Daycare	15	6.8
Security	15	6.8
Restaurants/Internet Cafe	15	6.8
Employment/Training Centre	13	5.9
Computers	11	5.0
Community Club	9	4.1
Chess/Other Activities	6	2.7
Affordable Housing	6	2.7
Night Life	6	2.7
Green Space	6	2.7
Aboriginal Focus	6	2.7
Community Sports	5	2.3
Bookstore	4	1.8
Post Office	3	1.4
Help for the Homeless	3	1.4
Laundromat	2	.9
Improved Lighting	2	.9
Bus Loop	2	.9
Drop off Area	1	.5
Student Housing	1	.5
Bible Study	1	.5
Improved Bus Service	1	.5
Clean-up Crew	1	.5
Parking/Traffic	1	.5
Bike Racks	1	.5
Access to Tools (Ladders, Mowers, etc)	1	.5
Total Responses	**222**	**100.0**

2.1 Summary of the door-to-surveys

The door-to-door surveys, although brief, determined that neighbourhood sentiment is generally positive, with many residents looking to the University of Winnipeg to help find solutions to crime and safety issue. In the wider picture, there also appears to be support for the project in being good for the students, neighbourhood, and for the downtown.

The final table certainly helped to establish some key priorities in the neighbourhood, including the importance of daycare, recreation clinics to more the pressing concerns such as security, employment and training options and an Aboriginal focus.

Also encouraging was that not many negative concerns were raised. In fact, relatively few persons offered negative comments. However, parking/traffic, setting priorities, trust and the project affecting in the neighbourhood should be carefully considered with responses to these issues clearly defined.

3.0 The community forums

The four forums were held and advertised locally within the West Broadway, Spence, St. Matthews and Central Park neighbourhoods. It was ensured that the sites chosen were considerate of those who were differently abled. The forums were designed as informal, but enhanced by a PowerPoint presentation that was followed by a question and answer period. In the case where the forums attracted large groups of residents, smaller groups were formed during the question and answer period to ensure that equal participation opportunities were offered.

West Broadway Neighbourhood:
Crossways-In-Common
December 9, 2004

General discussions involved who will fund the project, what type of new housing may be planned and the question of whether mixed use will be part of the development plan. The following suggestions emerged from the forum:

- New housing plans/models should fit within the current architectural design of the community's housing structures.

- The relationship between students who are "visitors" within the neighbourhood and residents could be enhanced.

- Link programs focusing on international students at UofW to West Broadway's refugees and immigrants.

- Adapt the principles of "safety through community design" when examining safety issues and design principles.

The participants benefited from the ample opportunity to speak during the forum and remained afterwards to discuss the project possibilities with facilitators. There was an overwhelming expression of interest in playing an active role in linking new Canadian residents to international student initiatives at the university.

SPENCE NEIGHBOURHOOD:
MAGNUS ELIASON RECREATION CENTRE
December 13, 2004

Community participation was the greatest in terms of attendance at the Spence forum. The following key issues were raised:

- Spence would welcome an enhancement of their current community economic development (CED) initiatives and would like to see CED strategies incorporated in the development plan.

- The community would appreciate an architectural design plan that would "draw" their residents inside the university campus.

- Incorporate strategies that link education to the Spence residents, i.e., the proposed medical clinic could involve training/employment opportunities to the residents of Spence.

- The residents strongly suggested an ecological approach in the development plan, one that is sustainable.

- The perceptions by the surrounding community that the Spence area is not safe, must be dispelled. Linking students to community through the use of various programs may help to decrease stereo typical attitudes.

- Spence residents are eager to use the university's facilities (Duckworth Centre etc) at an affordable rate.

Suggestions that the university exercise caution in creating too many community expectations. Measures should be incorporated into the development plan if the U of W governance structure changes to ensure the needs of the community will continue to be reflected.

West Central Neighbourhood:
St. Matthew's Maryland Christian Centre
December 15, 2004

Participation levels in the St. Matthews neighbourhood forum were slightly lower that the other meetings. Those who did participate generated significant and thoughtful discussions. The following key issues were raised:

- Concerns regarding increases in traffic flows once Spence Street is closed.
- Residents asked if this was a first step towards a larger redevelopment plan.
- The perception of others towards their neighbourhood are often rooted in unfair stereotypes surrounding issues such as feelings of safety, youth gangs, and other myths associated with violent activities.
- The Duckworth Centre has limited access into the building except for the area facing the university.

Generally, it was thought that traffic and parking may be improved under the proposed development plan. It was suggested that caution be used when choosing language to describe the plan to stakeholders. For instance, using the terms "opening Spence Street to pedestrians" rather than "closing Spence Street" was recommended as a more positive way to reflect the nature of the plan. The residents in this neighbourhood were clear in that they felt Uof W is welcoming to their residents and would like to see this atmosphere continue to spread.

WEST CENTRAL NEIGHBOURHOOD:
KNOX UNITED CHURCH
December 18, 2004

This group was one of the two smaller meetings in terms of attendance, but again, residents offered valuable insights. The following key issues were raised:

- The plan should respond to the dynamics of the transient nature of the residential base in the neighbourhood.

- The development plan should look at expanding the borders past Ellice Avenue (to the north) to avoid creating "an island" or "an insular environment" within the Portage Avenue to Ellice Avenue area.

- The Greyhound Bus depot is viewed as a "hole" and the hopes are that the university will eventually consider developing at this site.

In general, the community considers the university as an institution with "power and resources" and is pleased that they are taking an initiative towards improving the community through development schemes.

Community Forum

3.1 Summary of the community forums

The understanding that the development plan was not a "done deal' was appreciated by many community residents. It was also made clear, by many of those who attended the forums, that their input was valued, accepted, and would be included in the ongoing process.

In general, the surrounding community believes that the development plan will bring positive attributes to the area and are enlightened that an initiative for "their community" is taking place through the leadership of the university.

It is important to note that during the Spence forum discussions moved beyond the development plan, suggesting to the facilitators that a relationship between this district and the university has long been established and a level of trust exists.

4.0 Conclusion

Both methods of engaging the community resulted in positive comments along with an overall strong sense of support for the project. Being offered a "seat at the table" in the early stages was very much welcomed. The comments of residents also support the need to continue this process as the projects unfold. Furthermore, the thoughts, ideas, comments offered by residents all point to an existing opportunity to extend significant ownership of the project to the community.